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THE IDIOSYNCRATIC NATURE OF MARITIME CLUSTERS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THEIR POSSIBLE DIFFERENTIATION

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Abstract

The main objective of the current paper is to distinguish the most relevant aspects which can or should be observed in maritime clusters and are most likely to contribute to their inherent idiosyncratic nature. Based on a literature survey and on a benchmarking presentation of four successful examples of European maritime clusters, we use a study research methodology to substantiate the proposal of a possible differentiation framework for these types of clusters. Our purpose is to point out some of the main characteristics and critical factors for success that are inherent to maritime clusters. Although rarely addressed among the various authors considered in the literature review, our intention is to find out what distinctive competitiveness factors should be considered in a targeted multi-sectorial cluster approach to the economy of the sea, i.e. those that are likely to influence the creation, sustainable development and resilience of successful maritime clusters.

Keywords: “maritime cluster”, “differentiation”, “specialization”, “critical mass”.

JEL classification: O13; Q00; R11

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Pedro Valadas Monteiro has a PhD degree in Management from the University of Évora. He is co-author of several scientific papers. He's currently employed at the Regional Directorate of Agriculture and Fisheries of the Algarve, where he has been Deputy Director, and has responsibilities related with the management of investment projects in agriculture and fisheries co-funded by EU funds.

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Paulo Neto is Professor with PhD and Aggregation in Economics at the University of Évora, Portugal. He is author of several scientific papers and co-publisher of scientific books. He has been Pro-Rector for Strategic Planning and Director of the Economics Department in that University. He has co-ordinated several Master and Graduate courses at the same institution and participated in panels of Masters and PhDs in Portuguese and foreign Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Despite all the efforts to improve the environmental quality of coasts and seas around the world, degradation of ocean environments has continued. In addition, the lack of an integrated approach when using this shared resource has often caused conflict among economic, environmental and social objectives. The management of ocean resources in a global, sustained and integrated fashion has remained elusive, despite several international agreements and initiatives. In the debate over the economic scarcity of natural resources, one significant change in recent years has been a greater focus on the ecosystem services and the resource amenities yielded by natural environments. The general conclusion extracted from Krautkraemer (2005) is that technological progress has ameliorated the scarcity of natural resource commodities; but resource amenities have become scarcer and it is unlikely